

One Hundred Third Congress
of the
United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday,
the twenty-fifth day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-four*

An Act

To establish the Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission, and for
other purposes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of
the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Northern Great Plains Rural
Development Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the rural economy of the Northern Great Plains is
undergoing a substantial and potentially threatening trans-
formation;

(2) the rural Northern Great Plains suffers from substantial
measurable poverty, unemployment, outmigration, under-
employment, aging of the population, and low per capita income;

(3) the Northern Great Plains is highly rural and has
a highly dispersed population, and contains many Native Amer-
ican reservations;

(4) many of the basic industries of the rural Northern
Great Plains in natural resources are under stress;

(5) a concerted Federal, State, and local public and private
effort is needed if the rural Northern Great Plains is to share
in the general prosperity of the United States;

(6) the creation of jobs and expansion of existing businesses,
including small businesses, offer the greatest hope for rural
economic growth and revitalization in the Northern Great
Plains;

(7) the availability of capital, technology, market informa-
tion, infrastructure development, educational opportunities,
health care, housing, recreational activities, and resource devel-
opment are essential to successful business development in
the rural Northern Great Plains;

(8) the transportation needs of the rural Northern Great
Plains must be addressed through highway and bridge construc-
tion, air service availability, and rail service and river transport
development;

(9) because of the social, geographic, weather, historical,
and cultural ties of the rural Northern Great Plains as well
as common economic problems, planning for this unique region
is desirable and urgently needed; and

(10) in the rural Northern Great Plains, the tourism indus-
try offers significant additional potential for supporting eco-

conomic development and job growth, fostered by the wise stewardship of natural resources.

SEC. 3. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to establish the Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission to study and make recommendations regarding the economic needs and economic development of the rural Northern Great Plains by seeking and encouraging the participation of interested citizens, public officials, groups, agencies, businesses, and other entities in developing a 10-year rural economic development plan for the Northern Great Plains.

SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.

As used in this Act:

(1) CHAIRPERSON.—The term “chairperson” means the chairperson of the Commission.

(2) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission” means the Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission.

(3) NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS.—The term “Northern Great Plains” means the States of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota.

(4) STATE.—The term “State” means a State in the Northern Great Plains.

SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT.

There is established a Commission to be known as the “Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission”.

SEC. 6. MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION.

(a) MEMBERSHIP.—The Commission shall be composed of 10 members, of whom—

(1) 1 member shall be appointed by the Governor of each State; and

(2) 1 member shall be appointed from each of the States by the Secretary of Agriculture.

(b) TERM.—Each member of the Commission shall serve for such term as the official who appoints the member determines is appropriate.

(c) QUORUM.—Five members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, but the Commission may establish that a lesser number shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting hearings.

(d) MEETINGS.—

(1) FIRST MEETINGS.—Five or more members appointed under subsection (a)(1) shall determine the date, time, and place of the first meeting, and shall call the first meeting. At the first meeting, the members of the Commission shall appoint a chairperson from among the members appointed under subsection (a)(1). The first meeting of the Commission shall be held not later than 45 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) ADDITIONAL MEETINGS.—The Commission shall conduct such additional meetings as the Commission determines are appropriate.

(e) APPOINTMENTS.—Each appointment under this Act shall be made not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(f) **VACANCIES.**—A vacancy on the Commission shall not affect the powers of the Commission and shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

(g) **HEADQUARTERS.**—The Commission shall establish the location for the headquarters of the Commission.

SEC. 7. DUTIES.

(a) **PLAN.**—The Commission shall identify and study the economic development, infrastructure, technology, telecommunications, capital, employment, transportation, business resource development, education, health care, housing, and recreation needs of the Northern Great Plains and develop a 10-year plan that makes recommendations and establishes priorities to address the needs.

(b) **PREPARATION OF PLAN.**—In developing the plan, the Commission shall, with respect to the Northern Great Plains—

(1) sponsor and conduct investigations, research studies, and field hearings;

(2) review and evaluate available research, studies, and information on conditions in the areas referred to in subsection (a);

(3) study the economy, identifying strengths, weaknesses, participation levels, opportunities, and methods of addressing outmigration;

(4) develop a profile of, and a description of resources devoted to, economic development (including tourism), human resources (including demographics, outmigration, poverty, Native Americans, education, and training), infrastructure (including air, water, highway, rail, and telecommunications), and natural resources;

(5) study and evaluate the economic development resources, coordination, collaboration, and “best practices” of the Federal, State, and local governments, nonprofit organizations, universities, businesses, agricultural and natural resources groups, foundations, cooperatives, and other organizations;

(6) identify methods of facilitating the employment and business startups of unemployed, underemployed, and low-income individuals and households;

(7) identify effective methods for promoting development on Native American reservations;

(8) study the availability of methods of delivering public, private, and nonprofit capital and technical assistance for business startups and expansions, including farming and ranching;

(9) evaluate the availability of, need for, and strategies for providing and maintaining, the infrastructure, including air, water, highway, rail, and telecommunications;

(10) study the structure and potential development of major industries, including agriculture, timber, mining, tourism, and manufacturing (including the use of advanced technologies and processes and adding value to raw materials and component parts);

(11) study the competence and availability of the labor force, including the health, educational, training, housing, and economic needs of the labor force;

(12) develop an inventory of water, mineral, energy, timber, agricultural, fishery, wildlife, and other natural resources;

(13) assess the comparative cost of doing business;

(14) assess the international trading levels, markets, and practices, and potential opportunities;

(15) assess the interconnection between metropolitan and rural areas and identify methods through which the areas can collaborate;

(16) assess methods by which small communities and regions are collaborating or can collaborate in economic development initiatives;

(17) evaluate—

(A) the distribution and impact of Federal spending, including grant-in-aid programs, research, and Federal procurement, and compare the level of spending in these categories with spending in other regions of the country; and

(B) the extent to which reliance on Federal, State, and local government outlays for poverty programs can be reduced by outlays targeted for economic development;

(18) identify Federal, State, and local government programs, policies, and regulations that enhance or obstruct the development of businesses and well-paying jobs with long-term potential and that effectively use the skills, education, and training of the labor force;

(19) evaluate the potential for States to jointly finance projects and activities of regional benefit; and

(20) analyze such other issues as the Commission determines are relevant to future economic development.

(c) DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN.—In developing the plan, the Commission shall—

(1) provide a forum for the consideration of the problems of the rural Northern Great Plains and proposed solutions, and establish and utilize citizens groups, special advisory councils, public hearings, and conferences;

(2) seek and encourage the participation of interested citizens, public officials, groups, agencies, economic development organizations, natural resource organizations, and other organizations;

(3) make the Commission accessible to the individuals, groups, agencies, and organizations referred to in paragraph (2) by holding at least 1 well publicized public hearing in each State; and

(4) consult with—

(A) Federal, State, and local government agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation, and the Small Business Administration, bank regulatory agencies, and rural development councils;

(B) banks, insurance companies, venture capital companies, and other for-profit financial institutions;

(C) nonprofit and community-based development organizations, revolving loan funds, and other organizations;

(D) industry and sectoral organizations;

(E) foundations and universities; and

(F) other organizations involved in economic development activities.

SEC. 8. COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.

(a) **MEMBERS APPOINTED BY GOVERNORS.**—Each member of the Commission appointed by a Governor of a State may be compensated by the State that the member represents.

(b) **MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE SECRETARY.**—Each member appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, who is not otherwise employed by the United States Government, shall receive compensation at a rate determined by the Secretary of not to exceed the daily equivalent of the lowest annual rate of basic pay payable for grade GS-15 of the General Schedule under section 5332 of title 5, United States Code, including traveltime, for each day the member is engaged in the actual performance of the duties of the Commission. A member of the Commission appointed by the Secretary who is an officer or employee of the United States Government shall serve without additional compensation.

(c) **TRAVEL AND OTHER EXPENSES.**—Each member of the Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from the home or regular place of business of the member in the performance of services for the Commission. Each member of the Commission shall also be reimbursed by the United States Government for other necessary expenses incurred by the member in the performance of the duties of the member.

SEC. 9. POWERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS.

(a) **EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.**—The Commission may obtain the services of experts and consultants in accordance with section 3109 of title 5, United States Code.

(b) **FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES.**—The Commission may enter into agreements with the Administrator of General Services for the procurement of necessary financial and administrative services, for which payment shall be made by reimbursement from funds of the Commission in such amounts as are agreed on by the chairperson and the Administrator of General Services.

(c) **CONTRACTS.**—Subject to subsection (d), the Commission may enter into contracts with Federal and State agencies and private firms, institutions, and agencies for the conduct of research and surveys, the preparation of reports, and other activities necessary to carry out the duties of the Commission.

(d) **SUPPLIES, SERVICES, PROPERTY, AND CONTRACTS.**—The Commission may procure supplies, services, and property, and make contracts in any fiscal year, only to such extent and in such amounts as are provided in appropriation Acts.

(e) **HEARINGS.**—The Commission or, on the authorization of the Commission, a member of the Commission may, for the purpose of carrying out this Act, hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, and request the attendance and testimony of such witnesses and the production of such books, records, memoranda, papers, and documents as the Commission or the member considers appropriate.

(f) **INFORMATION.**—The Commission may acquire directly from any executive department, bureau, agency, board, commission, office, independent establishment, or instrumentality, information, suggestions, estimates, and statistics for the purpose of this Act. Each department, bureau, agency, board, commission, office, establishment, or instrumentality shall provide, to the extent per-

mitted by law, the information, suggestions, estimates, and statistics directly to the Commission, upon request by the chairperson.

(g) PERSONNEL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and without regard to chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates, the chairperson of the Commission may appoint, terminate, and fix the compensation of an Executive Director and such additional personnel as the chairperson determines are necessary to enable the Commission to carry out the duties of the Commission.

(2) COMPENSATION.—The rate of compensation of the Executive Director may not exceed a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title. The rate of compensation of all other personnel may not exceed a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the lowest annual rate of basic pay payable for grade GS-15 of the General Schedule under section 5332 of such title.

(h) ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER AGENCIES.—Upon request of the Commission, the head of any Federal agency may make any of the facilities and services of the agency available to the Commission or detail any of the personnel of the agency to the Commission, on a reimbursable basis, to assist the Commission in carrying out the duties of the Commission under this Act. If the head of an agency determines that the agency cannot make the facilities, services, or personnel available to the Commission, the head shall notify the chairperson in writing.

(i) POSTAL SERVICES.—The Commission may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as other departments and agencies of the United States.

SEC. 10. REPORTS.

(a) INTERIM REPORT.—Before the end of the 270-day period beginning on the date of the first meeting of the Commission under section 6(d)(1), the Commission shall submit a report to the Secretary of Agriculture, the President pro tempore of the Senate, the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives, the President, and the Governor of each State, describing the findings and activities of the Commission and the further activities necessary to carry out the duties of the Commission.

(b) FINAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Before the end of the 18-month period beginning on the date of the first meeting of the Commission under section 6(d)(1), the Commission shall submit to the Secretary of Agriculture, the President pro tempore of the Senate, the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives, the President, and the Governor of each State, a report describing the findings and activities of the Commission and recommendations in accordance with paragraph (2) regarding specific actions that are necessary to promote the economic development of the rural Northern Great Plains while preserving,

to the maximum extent possible, the natural beauty and habitat of the Northern Great Plains.

(2) RECOMMENDATIONS.—

(A) REGIONAL COLLABORATION.—The Commission shall, with respect to the Northern Great Plains—

(i) determine the most effective and appropriate method for ensuring continued collaboration within the region on economic development matters, considering regional compacts, cooperatives, foundations, development corporations, and other agreements and organizations;

(ii) identify the organizational structure, method of financing, functions, and participating organizations, of the collaboration referred to in clause (i);

(iii) identify methods of effective multi-community, substate, and small region development; and

(iv) assess the interconnection between metropolitan and rural areas and identify methods of collaboration between the areas.

(B) BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.—The Commission shall, with respect to the rural Northern Great Plains—

(i) recommend methods of diversifying the rural economy, including the development and financing of value-added and new-use agricultural products;

(ii) develop methods to promote and finance beginning owner-occupied farming and ranching operations;

(iii) recommend methods of promoting entrepreneurial development, including business startups and expansions;

(iv) recommend methods in which the public, private, and nonprofit sectors can help increase international trading levels and penetrate new markets in agricultural, manufactured, and service products;

(v) evaluate the potential utility of business and manufacturing networks in target sectors;

(vi) assess the competitiveness of manufacturers and the use of modern technology, processes, and information by the manufacturers, and methods of assisting manufacturers lacking the technology, processes, or information;

(vii) recommend methods in which capital and technical assistance can be provided on a regional or sectoral basis to business startups and expansions by public, private, and nonprofit organizations; and

(viii) recommend ways in which Federal and State resource conservation programs can be used to encourage tourism in the region.

(C) CAPITAL.—The Commission shall, with respect to the rural Northern Great Plains—

(i) determine if there are capital needs in the economy, and in what part of the economy the needs are located, and recommend how governmental, nonprofit, cooperative, community-based, microlending, banking, venture, seed, and nonbanking financing sources can assist in meeting the needs;

(ii) identify such strategies in organization, regulations, policy, marketing, and coordination as are

needed to implement a plan to meet the needs referred to in clause (i); and

(iii) recommend methods of utilizing secondary financial markets to increase the capital available for business development.

(D) INFRASTRUCTURE.—The Commission shall, with respect to the rural Northern Great Plains—

(i) prepare a plan to preserve, finance, and operate effective freight railroad service in coordination with States, the Federal Railroad Administration, the Interstate Commerce Commission, rail operators, shippers, and the financial community;

(ii) prepare an assessment and agreement on the capital needs, coordination, and financing of telecommunications infrastructure, in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the Department of Commerce, the Federal Communications Commission, the public utilities commission of each State, telephone companies and cooperatives, representative users, and such other entities as the Commission determines are appropriate; and

(iii) recommend strategies for addressing air, water, and highway needs.

(E) HUMAN RESOURCES.—The Commission shall, with respect to the rural Northern Great Plains—

(i) identify methods of facilitating the employment and business startups of individuals who are not effectively participating in the labor force, including unemployed, underemployed, and low-income individuals and households;

(ii) identify methods of coordinating on a regional or sectoral basis education and training programs that are tied to economic development initiatives, especially programs that address the outmigration of youth; and

(iii) study the competence and availability of the labor force and the effects of the health, educational, training, housing, and economic needs of the labor force, and identify regional strategies addressing the needs.

(F) GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS.—The Commission shall submit to the appropriate government, nonprofit, and private sector organizations recommendations for modifications or additions to the programs, policies, and regulations referred to in section 7(b)(18) to promote the rural development of the Northern Great Plains.

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SEC. 11. TERMINATION.

The Commission shall terminate on the earlier of—

(1) 120 days after the date of submission of the final report under section 10; and

(2) 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 12. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*